

IN THE CLAIMS:

The text of all pending claims, (including withdrawn claims) is set forth below. Cancelled and not entered claims are indicated with claim number and status only. The claims as listed below show added text with underlining and deleted text with ~~striketthrough~~. The status of each claim is indicated with one of (original), (currently amended), (cancelled), (withdrawn), (new), (previously presented), or (not entered). Please AMEND claims 1-19 ADD new claim 20n accordance with the following:

1. (original) A polling method for conducting poll on a respondent group including at least one or more first respondents and second respondents, the polling method comprising:
 - a first question step of presenting a question to a first respondent;
 - a free reply step of accepting input by a first respondent of an unguided reply ("free reply" hereinafter) to said question;
 - a first storage step of storing a free reply input by the first respondent as a reply option to said question;
 - a second question step of presenting said question to a second respondent after input of the free reply by the first respondent; and
 - a presentation step of presenting to the second respondent the reply option stored in said first storage step.
2. (original) A polling method according to claim 1, further comprising:
 - an elective reply step of accepting from a second respondent selection of a reply option presented in said presentation step ("elective reply" hereinafter);
 - a second storage step of storing an elective input by the second respondent; and
 - a compilation step of repeating said first question step, said free reply step, said first storage step, said second question step, said presentation step, said elective reply step, and said second storage step, and collecting and compiling elective replies and free replies from said respondent group.

3. (currently amended) A polling method according to ~~claim 1 or 2~~ claim 1, further comprising a first determination step of determining whether or not a free reply input by a first respondent and a predetermined reply option presented in said presentation step are substantially the same, wherein said presentation step further presenting at least one predetermined reply option.

4. (original) A polling method according to claim 3, wherein said first storage step stores said free reply as a reply option to said question, if said first determination step determines that said free reply input by said first respondent and said predetermined reply option are not substantially the same.

5. (original) A polling method according to claim 3, wherein:
if said first determination step determines that said free reply input by said first respondent is substantially the same as said predetermined reply option, said compilation step compiles said free reply as an elective reply made by selection of said predetermined reply option.

6. (currently amended) A polling method according to ~~claim 3 or 5~~ claim 3, further comprising a confirmation step of, if said first determination step determines that said free reply input by said first respondent and said predetermined reply option are substantially the same, accepting from said first respondent confirmation as to whether or not the determination is correct; wherein
said compiling is carried out if said determination is confirmed to be correct.

7. (original) A polling method according to any of claims 1, 2, 4, 5 or 6, further comprising a conditions-setting step of accepting settings on conditions for designating at least one or more first respondents; wherein:

in said first question step, said question is presented to one or more first respondents who have been extracted based on said conditions.

8. (original) A polling method according to any of claims 2, 4, 5, or 6, further comprising:

a second determination step of increasing a count of reply options to said question when a free reply is stored in said first storage step, and determining whether the count of reply has reached a predetermined maximum value;

a third storage step of storing correlatively with said question options that said presentation step has presented to second respondents; and

a re-surveying step of, if said second determination step determines that said reply options count has reached said maximum value, extracting based on data stored in said third storage step second respondents who have made elective replies from options numbering a count that is a predetermined minimum value or less, and presenting said extracted second respondents with said question.

9. (original) A polling method according to either claim 1 or claim 2, further comprising:

an iterating step of repeating said first question step, said free reply step and said first storage step; and

a control step in which said iterating step is terminated, and said presentation step and said second question step are performed.

10. (original) A polling device for conducting poll on a respondent group including at least one or more first respondents and second respondents, the polling device comprising:

first question means for presenting a question to a first respondent;

free reply means for accepting input by the first respondent of an unguided reply ("free reply" hereinafter) to said question;

first storage means for storing a free reply input by the first respondent as a reply option to said question;

second question means for presenting said question to a second respondent after input of the free reply by the first respondent; and

presentation means for presenting to the second respondent the reply option stored by said first storage means.

11. (original) A polling computer product for conducting poll on a respondent group including at least one or more first respondents and second respondents, the computer product for causing a computer to function as:

first question means for presenting a question to a first respondent;

free reply means for accepting input by the first respondent of an unguided reply ("free reply" hereinafter) to said question;

first storage means for storing a free reply input by the first respondent as a reply option to said question;

second question means for presenting said question to a second respondent after input of the free reply by the first respondent; and

presentation means for presenting to the second respondent the reply option stored by said first storage means.

12. (original) A computer-readable recording medium on which is recorded a polling program for conducting a poll on a respondent group including at least one or more first respondents and second respondents, the computer-readable recording medium on which is recorded a polling program for causing a computer to function as:

first question means for presenting a question to a first respondent;

free reply means for accepting input by the first respondent of an unguided reply ("free reply" hereinafter) to said question;

first storage means for storing a free reply input by the first respondent as a reply option to said question;

second question means for presenting said question to a second respondent after input of the free reply by the first respondent; and

presentation means for presenting to the second respondent the reply option stored by said first storage means.

13. (original) A polling method comprising:

a question step of displaying a question;

a reply step of displaying at least one or more predetermined reply options to the displayed question, and accepting selection of any of the predetermined reply options, or input of an unguided reply ("free reply" hereinafter), to the question;

a first determination step of determining whether a free reply is being entered;

a second determination step of, if a free reply is being entered, determining whether the free reply being entered and any of the predetermined reply options will be substantially the same before the input of the free reply has finished; and

a support step of, if said second determination step has determined that the free reply and a predetermined reply option will be substantially the same, supporting input of the free reply or selection of the predetermined reply option.

14. (new) A polling method according to claim 2, further comprising a first determination step of determining whether or not a free reply input by a first respondent and a predetermined reply option presented in said presentation step are substantially the same, wherein said presentation step further presenting at least one predetermined reply option.

15. (new) A polling method according to claim 5, further comprising a confirmation step of, if said first determination step determines that said free reply input by said first respondent and said predetermined reply option are substantially the same, accepting from said first respondent confirmation as to whether or not the determination is correct; wherein said compiling is carried out if said determination is confirmed to be correct.